Reservoir Operations *Study*

visual resources

FACT SHEET

TVA

Impact Evaluation On Visual Resources

The purpose of the study is to determine if changes in TVA's reservoir system operating policies would produce greater overall public value.

Background

TVA is conducting a formal evaluation of its policies for operating the Tennessee River reservoir system, including an analysis of the economic impacts of any potential changes in these policies. Existing policies affect how reservoir levels fluctuate, when changes in reservoir levels occur, and the amount of water flowing through the reservoir system at different times of the year, depending on rainfall.

The purpose of the study is to determine if changes in TVA's reservoir system operating policies would produce greater overall public value. Technical analyses will be performed to evaluate the impacts of TVA's current policies and the potential impacts of alternatives on a number of resource areas and other issues.

The two-year Reservoir Operations Study (ROS) is scheduled for completion in October 2003.

Impacts on Visual Resources will be evaluated as part of the ROS and results will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). TVA will conduct the study in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

Potential Impacts

- The landscape character of the Tennessee River reservoir system varies tremendously throughout the Valley, with the river itself representing one of the most outstanding visual resources.
- The reservoirs include scenic islands, rock bluffs, secluded coves, wetlands, and historic waterfronts. They are bordered by wooded shoreline, attractive communities and pastoral areas, many of which are framed by high, forested ridges.
- Changes in reservoir system operating policies could improve or detract from the scenic qualities of the river system. They could increase or lessen the adverse visual impact of exposed mud flats, bare earth slopes, and downed trees along eroded shoreline banks.

Geographic Area

- The region of influence for visual impact includes the maximum water surface of each reservoir and extends one mile back from the shoreline.
- Water level and flow changes are predominantly seen along shoreline areas, from water craft, and from viewpoints on back-lying lands nearby.
- Views from gently sloping areas are normally limited by surrounding woodland or other features, so these viewpoints are normally near the reservoir.
- More distant views from steeper surrounding lands are generally enclosed by ridges that peak within a mile from the shoreline.
- Occasional views are also seen from several miles away where reservoir changes become less discernible as the viewing distances increase.

Scope of Analysis

- The data used to conduct the visual analyses will include the targeted monthly reservoir elevations under the current operating plan, monthly elevation history during the plan, reservoir land plans, topographic maps, and the proposed monthly reservoir elevation data for each alternative operating program.
- The alternative flow volumes, reservoir elevations and the extent of water-level fluctuations will be analyzed to determine their effects on visible erosion and drawdown exposure.
- The visual character of existing shoreline, topography, land use, and current reservoir operations will be assessed in terms of scenic attractiveness, visual integrity, view sensitivity, viewing distance, and related issues. The degree and extent of change in these characteristics will be evaluated to determine the potential visual impacts of each alternative.
- Results of public input, erosion, and economic analyses will also be addressed where they relate to visual resources.

For More Information

To submit comments or get additional information, members of the public are invited to visit TVA's Web site at www.tva.com, to call toll-free 1-888-882-7675, to fax TVA at 865-632-3146, or to write to ROS Project Manager David Nye, Tennessee Valley Authority, c/o WT 11 A, 400 West Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902.